



PHIL BREDESEN  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE  
DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION  
TENNESSEE FIRE SERVICE AND CODES ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY  
2161 UNIONVILLE- DEASON ROAD  
BELL BUCKLE, TENNESSEE 37020  
TELEPHONE: (931) 294-4111



PAULA A. FLOWERS  
COMMISSIONER

## FIRE SAFETY FOR THE ELDERLY

What two things do the young and the elderly have in common? Frequent burns and fires. The elderly represent part of the largest population segment involved in fire deaths and injuries annually. Due to age, some seniors experience losses in abilities to see, hear or respond quickly. But they still have their common sense and that, coupled with the knowledge of fire prevention, can help save lives.

- Keep large, deep ashtrays handy for smokers. Smoking is a major cause of fire deaths, especially among the elderly. Check smoking areas and furniture for hot cigarettes and ashes.
- Never smoke in bed or while reclining on any upholstered furniture.
- Keep robes, housecoats and other loose-fitting garments out of the kitchen while cooking. Clothing fires are the most frequent for seniors and many of them are due to careless smoking.
- If your clothes do catch on fire, don't run.
  - Stop what you are doing
  - Drop to the ground and cover your eyes and mouth with your hands
  - Roll over and over until the flames are extinguished
- Don't keep items on the shelf or in the cabinet over the stove. Each time you reach for one, you take a risk of getting burned.
- Arrange for good lighting, especially in the kitchen. Mark hard to read controls in bright colors or large letters.
- Turn pot handles inward while cooking and keep pot holders handy. Shield yourself from steam when uncovering food. Scald injuries are common in the elderly.
- If a grease fire starts, slide the lid or a bigger pan on the fire. **DO NOT** put water on a grease fire. **DO NOT** carry the pan. You might spill the burning grease on you. Call the fire department and get out immediately. Don't wait to collect valuables. They are not worth your life.
- Don't let grease collect in your broiler, stove, oven or exhaust fan duct.
- Keep portable heaters away from beds, furniture and drapes.
- Have heating systems cleaned and checked annually.
- Clean out storage areas. Old papers, magazines and oily rags are fuel for a fire.
- Choose a multi-purpose ABC fire extinguisher. Know when and how to use it.
- Install smoke detectors and check them regularly. Change the batteries annually.